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FRANCE AND THE WAR

J. MARK BALDWIN





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FRANCE AND THE WAR

AS SEEN BY AN AMERICAN

BY

JAMES MARK BALDWIN



D. APPLETON AND COMPANY
NEW YORK 1916

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Printed in the United States of America

\$0.50

FEB 26 1916

©CLA420916

no. 1.

PREFATORY NOTE

Having lived in France the better part of each of the last six years, I have had unusual opportunities of observation by reason of the great hospitality shown me in scientific and literary circles. It is only fair to add, also, that my previous and more remote prejudgments were, in many respects, favorable to Germany, because of my sojourn in Berlin and Leipzig as a student.

J. M. B.

France, brave foster-sister, hail!
Thy comrade since our double birth,
Thy twin Republic greets thee, hail!
Once more to prove thy boasted power
To make the distant vision real,
Wed deed to thought! Reveal again
Thy soul intrepid, kin to ours—
Defender of the rights of man!

(From the author's lines "The Voice of America—
August 1915," printed in part in THE TIMES.)

FRANCE AND THE WAR

THE position of England in the war has been much discussed, although to the un-biassed onlooker it seems plain enough, no doubt because the matter has been clouded by reason of certain charges brought against England by Germany. England has become Germany's "dearest foe" in this war. As a result the place of France and the reasons for French participation in the war have remained under certain obscurities which, in justice to the French, should be cleared up.

It is remarkable, at the outset, that the Germans do not bring any charges against France, save the vague one—put forth officially late in the game—that France had intended to violate the neutrality of

FRANCE AND THE WAR

Belgium. They confess, on the contrary, that it was their own intention to crush France utterly in any case. On this showing, they admit that France was fully justified in resisting; and they admire the heroism with which she resisted. There is a good deal more in the subject of the place of France in the present war than this, however; and certain of the current presuppositions on the subject—current in the United States at least—are ill-founded. I wish to show this in what follows.

I

My principal object is to show that modern France, the France of the Third Republic, is not a military or martial country in either of the two distinct senses, moral and political, of the term "militarism." It is said, by apologists for Germany, that France has a standing army larger in proportion to her population than Germany, and that the term of compulsory service is longer than in the former country. These facts present the outward signs of militarism, superficially understood. But they do not indicate either a military attitude toward life, a psychological and moral militarism, so to designate it, or an official military attitude toward other countries, a political militarism. They are to be explained as issuing

FRANCE AND THE WAR

from two general causes and as reflecting two great facts in the life of Republican France—facts, one of which the French have accepted until recently with resignation, and the other of which they are only now appreciating at its full worth. Both have become so prominent and everpresent to the minds of the people that they are fixed in special phrases: the “German menace” and the “triple entente.” In French opinion, from coachman to minister, from Royalist to Radical Socialist, the German menace has become, since the Tangier incident of 1905, a sort of datum of the emotional life, an assumption that needs no argument, an ever-present fact, like the danger of a cholera epidemic or the menace of a flood in the Seine. And the triple entente, the alliance with Russia, taken together with the understanding with England, has been considered, in all educated and well-in-

FRANCE AND THE WAR

formed circles, the available political weapon, the tool of diplomacy, the pledge of the preservation not only of the liberties of France, but of those of all Europe. It has insured the superior power by which alone military aggression could be met. Before 1905, the date of the Tangier incident, neither of these facts had its true value in popular opinion. Although the German menace existed, it was not perceived in all its meaning save by certain prudent statesmen, like Delcassé, who were not, as so many of the politicians were, chasing the rainbows of international socialism.

I wish to enlarge a little on these two things, especially the former, as explaining the moral and psychological tolerance extended in recent years to the military establishment, and justifying the political policies by which the "triple entente" was maintained and extended.

II

The German menace dates, of course, in its present form—speaking as if before the present war broke out—from the war of 1870, after which France found herself in a position of humiliation. She had good reason to see, in the terms of the treaty of Frankfort a threat of repeated aggression and possible extinction. During the early years of the Republic, however, the theories of the Jacobins were so “violently pacific,” and were to such an extent based on international tolerance and brotherhood, that the French lost their fear of German aggression and also much of their own proper patriotic feeling. The sense of security based on internationalism was aggravated by the

FRANCE AND THE WAR

success of the socialistic party in 1902, and by the subsequent radical development of theoretical democracy during the administration of Combes.

But the fear and the patriotic feeling were both revived by a series of unprovoked diplomatic and military provocations which seemed to the French to be due, on the one hand, to the German appreciation of the national *insouciance*, and on the other hand, to German jealousy of the cultural successes of France.

During a series of years, the French met this policy of pinpricks with a moderation, *sang-froid*, and dignity to which all the world testified on the occasion of the Agadir incident and during the entire Morocco embroglio; the more striking in that this incident followed the Tangier affair and other events all calculated to excite suspicion and arouse resentment. Anyone who cares to look up the files of

FRANCE AND THE WAR

the *Temps*, the *Débats*, the *Figaro*, during those anxious days of 1911, when the issues of war and peace were in the balance, will find evidence of this. Calm, resolute, as in the similar days of last July, the French press pointed out reasons for the aggression, finding in it only that specter, the *menace Allemande* in a new form. There was no public excitement, none of the hysterical display that superficial British and American opinion sometimes associates with the French. Admiration of this fine moderation was publicly expressed at certain American functions held at Paris at the time. The French attitude was recognized as showing a certain stoical resolution, based on the anticipation, not then to be fully realized as it is so horribly now, of the inevitable war. Of the coming war there has been no doubt at all since the fall of Delfosse in 1905, a sacrifice to Germany. But

FRANCE AND THE WAR

in 1911 there was a sense of adequate preparation, as there had not been in 1905, a sense of the mastery of the vital and material resources of war, which so nobly appears today in all the French people.

Soon after came the Saverne affair, followed by a remarkable series of pin-pricks to French susceptibilities as represented by their sympathy for the unfortunate people of Alsace. In certain villages, the populace had ventured to smile at the arrogance of the Prussian military authorities and some had even joked at the expense of the strutting German soldier. In the contest that ensued between the civil and military authorities, the latter were of course victorious: military personages found guilty by the civil courts of outrages against the populace were freed by Berlin from all penal responsibility; and innocent citizens, sus-

FRANCE AND THE WAR

pected of French sympathies, were crushed by the imposing authority of the mailed fist. An officer found guilty of slashing a cripple with his saber was given military justification under cover of a nominal reproof. These petty tyrannies were accomplished by subterfuges which show that the methods now employed in Belgium are no new discovery. Had not the cripple showed himself guilty by trying to run away? Finally, the famous cartoonist and literary man, Hansi, who ventured to portray the grotesque side of militarism in daily life, had to flee covertly from the country into France to escape a sentence of imprisonment.

All this pettiness was met by the French with good humor, but humor tinged with the melancholy of a deep-seated presentiment. The subtle irony seen in French publications of the year 1911-1912, had a touch of bitterness and withal of dis-

FRANCE AND THE WAR

gust. What does it show? was the question asked in those days. The reply was not Prussian conceit, coarseness, braggadocio only, but an underlying anti-French policy, a smouldering jealousy, an unsatiated appetite. French opinion, aroused before, was now shocked; its native chivalry was outraged. And more than this, its conviction of German animosity was confirmed. Are such things, they asked, as free speech, public criticism of officials, the rights of the press, suppressed in Alsace? Do the Germans themselves accept elsewhere such violations of the elementary rights of free citizenship? They were justified in thinking that even the Teutonic thoroughness was stretching itself a little in thus presenting to the gaze of the sensitive people across the border such a spectacle of the lost territory.

But the more essential fact was that

FRANCE AND THE WAR

the French were unable to put themselves in the shoes of the Germans, to think as the Germans thought. Their mentality was different, and the training they had received. Since the day of Gambetta, the French had been losing respect for the military point of view which makes the soldier the center of things temporal and eternal. They were busy working out their theories of democracy and the rights of man. They shrugged their shoulders in private at the German *cochons*, the people who dressed untidily, left their hands uncared for, trod on one's toes in summer hotels, talked constantly of their *nazionali* *Bewusstsein*, and displayed a sort of egoistic religious sentiment which flattered their national vanity (I speak as the Frenchman would). But they now found in this same Germanism something to be watched, something allied openly with force, something that authorized its

FRANCE AND THE WAR

apostles to preach conquest and world-dominance. This is what the French have found growing up in their minds these last years, becoming a nightmare as every evening paper was found to report some new sign of what they now call "bocherie." Since the war broke out, I have heard more than once the sentiment: "Thank God, now we know what is to be done." There is no longer the uncertainty, the hesitation, the dread; these have been replaced by the task, the duty.

What right, does one ask, had France to prepare to meet such menace as this? The right of any nation to live, to cherish its national aspirations, to pursue its mission in peace. France found herself in living in a fool's paradise, indulging in the socialistic dream of universal fraternity. There had even been a Germanophile movement—or at least a movement of imitation—in science, education, and

FRANCE AND THE WAR

letters, similar to that from which the United States has been recently recovering. But when the ominous clouds appeared, French patriotism was reborn in a day.

That this represents truthfully the state of the French mind at the outbreak of the present war, there are abundant external signs to show: for example, the character of recent French governments. France has had a socialistic government for years. The dominant coalition of parties has been professedly antimilitary. Every increase in the budget for army or navy—increases which have been continuous since the Tangier incident—has had long and passionate discussion and has required overwhelming justification from the point of view of the national defense. Cabinet after cabinet has felt the drift toward disarmament, being obliged to pacify the pacifists, so to

FRANCE AND THE WAR

speak, in respect to the most moderate measures of military prudence. The Radical Socialists, led by Jean Jaurés, outspoken and persistent both in the Chamber and in their organs, *l'Humanité* and *La Guerre sociale*, have continued the tradition of Combism. Fortunately, the rising tide of nationalism has been more than a sufficient antidote.

The significance of all this is shown in the last great struggle of the kind, that which took place over the new law requiring three years of compulsory military service—the *loi de trois ans*.¹ The passage of this law, while not technically the cause of the fall of the Barthou cabinet, was practically so, by reason of the

¹ The history of the laws regulating the term of service is itself significant. The term had been reduced by successive steps until it stood at two years. The return to military prudence and preparation was then reflected in this new law restoring the period of three years.

FRANCE AND THE WAR

sharpening and solidifying of the opposition which it brought about. Never in recent years—never since the Dreyfus affair, let us say—has the Republic had a time of greater storm and stress than during the period of the discussion of this measure. Never was the policy of militarism as such more plainly and vigorously condemned; never were those of national defense and racial integrity more earnestly and forcefully advocated. Never was the German menace more eloquently, and withal more convincingly, presented to the people of France. The measure was passed in a great outburst of popular feeling. The government had staked its existence upon its passage, declaring it to be essential to the national safety. Here was the German menace taking on concrete numerical form; and it was such men as Barthou, Léon Bourgeois, Alexandre Ribot, Poincaré—econ-

FRANCE AND THE WAR

omists, scholars, statesmen of diverse political creeds—who formulated the national sentiment, supported by a public press which was conducted with unusual ability and high patriotism. How the wisdom of these men was justified by the event!

In the subsequent cabinets, dominated by extreme radicals, the law of three years has remained on the statute books. Its former enemies, although in power, have not dared to repeal it in the face of the national sentiment. Its wisdom was finally acknowledged by Doumerge and his fellow-ministers, Caillaux *et al.*, whether from patriotism or from party policy one may entertain a doubt. It had come into effective operation when the war-cloud burst; and its immediate effect was a considerable increase in the army, through the retention of the class of men who would otherwise

FRANCE AND THE WAR

have been released in 1914. Since the war began, socialists of the most radical type have declared their satisfaction that the law became effective in time. No doubt the martyred Jaurés would have joined in this view had he lived to see the course of events. In the present war cabinet, formed from all the political parties for the national defense, two portfolios are held by well-known militant socialists—Guesde and Sembat. In no party, moreover, is there any sign of disaffection in respect to the conduct of the war.¹

¹ The opinions of Guesde and Sembat on the war and the future of socialism are to be found in the newspapers of February 11 (see the *Figaro* of that date); they both gave out interviews outlining their attitude in respect to the proposed conference of socialists of the allied nations, held in London during the week of February 14. It is to be regretted that the same united front has not been presented by the English socialists, as may be gathered from the remonstrances addressed to Mr. Kier Hardie and his associates of the

FRANCE AND THE WAR

So far then from indicating a military state of mind in the nation at large, the will to be a great military power, the renewed warlike preparations of France in the last decade represent something very different—a growing apprehension, and with it a reaction against the loose unnational liberalism of the democratic *doctrinaires*. Such military precautions may have increased the danger of war; the increase of armaments usually does have such an effect. This was one of the arguments of Jaurés and others against the law of three years. The German Chancellor, in fact, made use of the passage of this law to support his demand for new military credits in Germany. But there is every reason to believe that this and the other military measures taken

Independent Labor Party by Mr. Hyndman and by the Belgian leader, Vandervelder (see recent issues of *Humanité*).

FRANCE AND THE WAR

in France were in themselves motivated by considerations of national defense; it is certain, at any rate, they were received by the people in this sense.

Another motive of aggression attributed to the French is that of revenge—revenge for the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. Such a passion of revenge is constantly charged to them by what the French characterize as the clumsy indulgence of patronizing enemies. The Germans find in this feeling the sufficient reason of all the French military measures. It is so generally taken for granted, indeed, as being a natural feeling, that the entire absence of it before the present war, a fact to which I can testify, is more than noteworthy. Never have I heard such a feeling expressed in any French circle; nor have I heard the topic of revenge discussed except in historical connections. The *revanche* of the Gambettists, and that

FRANCE AND THE WAR

of the special prophets of Alsace like Deroulède, were discussed with the ordinary French love of analysis and paradox, but not as being a living national purpose or motive. The feeling was really one of humane pity for the inhabitants of the lost provinces and the wish that at some future time they might be delivered. It was pro-Alsatian more than anti-German. So radically unmilitary have their ideals become under the Republican régime, that the French cannot conceive of happiness or contentment in unfortunate Alsace, under the Prussian rule. Of course now, since the outbreak of war, the people talk of revenge and the literary men of retribution;¹ it is part of the new war spirit.

¹ Shortly after the outbreak of hostilities copies of the treaty of Frankfort were sold on the boulevards; and a play, entitled "l'Aube de la Revanche," is now (February) being produced in one of the Paris theaters.

FRANCE AND THE WAR

But to speak of the French nation as having prepared its army and built its navy in order to wreak vengeance on Germany is nothing short of grotesque. The motive of revenge in such a form would conflict with the profoundest elements of the culture of modern France.

A quite different sentiment, entertained by the French people generally, is everywhere in evidence—that which is directed against the religious chauvinism found associated with German militarism. This is to them a form of pretense, of religiosity, accompanied by a ridiculous inflation of personality. The Kaiser's frequent appeals to the Deity on terms of equality, and with the suggestion of a secret *entente*¹ between himself and

¹ An entente, however, which, *through no fault of the Kaiser's*, does not always produce the results desired. His Majesty is reported to have said to his troops (*Vossische Zeitung*, as quoted in the *Figaro*, February

FRANCE AND THE WAR

God, illustrate so well what is meant that the reader will have no difficulty in recognizing it. French writers find in this religiosity one of the prime factors of racial exclusiveness; to the onlooker it offers a real problem in the psychology of the military State. Looked at from the point of view of French liberalism, it proves the Germans to be at a tribal stage of political development and religious culture alike. Respectful to religion always—reverential now, as I am to show lower down—the unpolitical everyday Frenchman has no patience with the form of religion in which the Deity identifies his interest exclusively with those of a self-elected tribe or race, and issues to a “chosen people” a man-

17): “I hope with all my heart we shall be able to celebrate the sacred festival of Easter in peace and joy at our homes. I call upon God to witness that if this is not the case, it will not be my fault.”

FRANCE AND THE WAR

date to conquer and destroy. In Germany, as all who have lived there know, this is not an accidental, local, or superficial thing. Taught in the schools and universities by means of state-edited textbooks, enforced by church, press, and public opinion, equally under state supervision, it has been wrought into the national tissue. It is the justification, in theory and practice, not only of the Germany that now is, but of that which is to come—*Deutschland über Alles*. The “national destiny,” gained by alliance with the Almighty, is the end that justifies the means. The Chancellor so declared in reference to the violation of the territory of Belgium. With this end goes the most varied means: the sword, the torch, the bomb, the mine, the diplomatic subterfuge. It restores the commission of Gideon who slew the enemies of Jehovah, and that of Elijah who

FRANCE AND THE WAR

destroyed the prophets and also the "high places"—the cathedrals, such as they were—of Baal.

In contrast with this, the cosmopolitanism of French culture shows itself possessed of all the benign and pacific marks of true toleration. Call it free thought, if you will, call it enlightenment, attribute it to rationalism or to positivism or to socialism, its character remains the same. It shudders with horror at the invocation of a Deity who spreads His glory by the shedding of blood; and it cannot restrain the shrug of contempt for the devotee who makes himself the chosen instrument of such a Deity. Professor Boutroux has declared that a certain brutality is inherent in the nature of German national culture; we see here, perhaps, the reason for it. It finds its prototype in the relentlessness of the destroying angel of tradition—now taking form in

FRANCE AND THE WAR

the Uhlan, equipped in German casque and mail. No doubt there are many men inspired with the zeal of crusaders among the hosts that have invaded Belgium and France. I think the French feel that the great body of the German middle-class people look upon themselves and their nation as true crusaders, following a divinely commissioned Gideon; but they believe that these are directed in their mission by religious egoists and conscious hypocrites,¹ and the very severity of their

¹ This impression of hypocrisy is just now brought out in the comments upon the German war circular, "Appeal to the Christians of Protestant Churches of the French Language," addressed to "Foreign Protestants in Neutral and Hostile Countries," in which Germany makes herself champion of Protestant Christianity and Christian Missions as against England! One is constrained to ask: How about Catholic Austria, and Mohammedan Turkey? Signers of this manifesto, among them Eucken, Harnack, and Wundt, must know that similar appeals issued in the Orient describe the Kaiser as "His Islamic Majesty" who is to impose upon

FRANCE AND THE WAR

judgment of the military class and of its resort to religious cant, shows how far removed the French point of view is from that of such a militarism.

As to cosmopolitanism, the French value it as being the priceless pacific agency of life, the destroyer of racial prejudice, the begetter of sympathetic relationships among men. But they are coming to recognize that in the theory of internationalism there are the germs of national weakness, since in practice it destroys true patriotic feeling and produces symptoms of political palsy.

To one who has lived in both countries, Germany and France, the contrast between them is striking in the extreme; and both differ from the complacent but

Europe the Mohammedan faith now espoused by him. The similar cultivation of the favor of the Vatican is left to Austria.

FRANCE AND THE WAR

tolerant provincialism of the English. Not only in popular sentiment does the difference appear, but in the avowed purposes and policies of institutions and social organizations of all sorts. The Germans declaim against the use of French fashions; deplore the introduction of French words even on menu-cards; read lectures, in the press and by resolution of Germanic societies, to the Germans in America who give their sons and daughters un-German names; boycott music not made in Germany. I was once publicly reprovved on a German liner, when at the captain's dinner given before landing, as the different national flags were taken in turn out of the cake in the center of the table by admiring citizens, I rose, in the absence of any English passenger, and waved the Union Jack along with the Stars and Stripes. "There," said the officer in charge of the

FRANCE AND THE WAR

table, "is a man who does not love Germany—*der Deutschland nicht liebt.*" Not that sort of Germany, certainly! In what other country would an order be possible forbidding all diplomatic agents of the government, in time of peace, to marry foreign wives?

In Paris there is none of this, little of it anywhere in France. In fact up to a recent date, true national sentiment has exposed itself to the risk of being called narrow and provincial. Recently the French waiters in Paris have complained of the overwhelming and unrestricted invasion of their trade by Germans, but without result. The complaint of the Parisian opera dancers, in view of the declining favor in which they were held beside the Russian and other foreign dancers, met only the reply that they must improve their performance and maintain the French superiority. Last year, to-

FRANCE AND THE WAR

ward the close of the musical year, a prominent daily paper said, in a spirit of banter: "Now that we have had a 'Russian season,' and a 'Viennese season,' and 'Italian and American seasons,' there is nothing in the way of our hearing something French!" What Paris dress-maker would talk of excluding German or American models, and what French artist would wish to forbid the importation of German or Italian paintings or sculptures? The sort of national feeling that refuses hospitality to the best things, that fears competition with alien methods and ideas, that sets more store by the accidents of place and birth than by what is essential to the universal ideals of art and of humanity—this is not French. If anyone doubt this, he may question any typical Frenchman of education as to his feelings on hearing of the destruction of architectural monuments at Louvain and

FRANCE AND THE WAR

Rheims; or, to get a wider answer, consult the editorial opinions of the French newspapers of the dates of these occurrences. He will find horror expressed and protest, it is true; but not merely national horror, not merely protest in the name of Belgian or French art. Rather will he be impressed by the sentiment of universal loss, of the outrage committed upon art as such, of the affront to human aspiration and the insult to the genius of the past. "Mon Dieu," says he, "c'est irréparable"—it cannot be replaced! While from Germany comes the sentiment: "What matters it, really? It is a pity, but we can make better ones!"¹

¹ I quote the following from the report made to the German government by its expert, Professor Paul Clemen, on the destruction of Rheims Cathedral (cited by M. Damilier, French sub-Secretary of Fine Arts): "This extravagant worship of monuments is a strange

FRANCE AND THE WAR

None of the methods characteristic of a militant civilization, as we may call it, is tolerated among the French. They reject the idea that real culture can be imposed by requiring this or that mode of life or standard of taste, an idea which, in societies where it is current, betrays the reflection of military discipline into the moral life. How can free art, free science, free speech, live in an atmosphere in which the spontaneous activities of the individual, his impulses to live his life and express his opinions in the light of his conscience, are checked at every turn? In France, the wonderful development of the fine arts testifies to the absence of that mode of deference which refers all things to the over-lord, from the cut of the mus-

sentimentality, and anachronism . . . at a time when our existence and the victory or decline of German thought (*Deutschen Denken*) are at stake."

FRANCE AND THE WAR

tachios to the genuineness of an antique statue. In the Third Republic the popular heroes have not been military men, but literary men—artists, dramatists, the laureates of the Academies, and the winners of the *prix de Rome*. The appearance of new books by Anatole France and Paul Bourget have been national events. The production of “Chantecler” and the activities and death of Gaston Calmette touched the Paris of the time as much as the successful sorties made by the troops in Morocco. Whatever this may have meant—and for some time it betrayed possibly a spirit too careless of the things of real national import, due to an ideology of liberalism rather than to a sound philosophy of society—it showed, without any doubt, that the military interest held no dominant place in the public mind. Just this state of things, indeed, has led to the underestimation of the

FRANCE AND THE WAR

present strength, and also of the real patriotism of the French, in the minds of foreign critics who have not read the more recent signs of the times.

Nowadays, while war is waging, the *tristesse*, the resigned patience of the people, is touching, pathetic. Theatrical performances, save of certain types, are forbidden; light music, gaiety in public places, modish dress, are not countenanced. Public sensibility revolts at the suggestion of lightness, in view of the usurpation of the resources of life by the fatalities of war. There is a moral *élan*, a desperate earnestness, a new hope, an enthusiasm for the cause; and these give the assurance of victory. But there is also the shock to the feelings of a high-minded people who look forward to a long struggle against the tendencies to debasement and materialization of moral values which always follow war. "Alas,

FRANCE AND THE WAR

everything will have to be repaired," says a prominent writer. But over against this is the recognition of the new purpose, the spirit of self-mastery, of which I speak again just below. Remarking upon such an unimportant incident as the hissing, at one of the theaters, of an actress who danced the tango, M. Alfred Capus says: "Perhaps it will be one of the miracles of the war, under the favorable conditions of victory, to have reformed the public taste." I may cite in this connection two snatches of conversation—almost at random. Early in the war I asked an officer whether the French aviators would follow the German example of dropping bombs upon undefended cities. "Impossible," said he, "nous ne sont pas des brutes!" I remember well the look on the face of a society woman on hearing it said that the theaters in Berlin were patronized as

FRANCE AND THE WAR

usual: "How can they," she said; "do they not mourn for their dead?"

In another respect, France has shown herself for some years occupied with other things than armaments and military projects. I refer to the growth of a new idealism.

Last winter a well-known English writer, Mr. J. E. C. Bodley, published an essay on "The Decay of Idealism in France,"¹ from which he read extracts before the Academy of Moral Sciences. His point was, in effect, that the age of machinery, the mechanical age, had succeeded the age of idealism; and that in France, as everywhere, there had been a materializing of the spiritual life, a decline in the force of ideals. The French answer to this, repeated many times in my hearing, and formally expressed by

¹ A chapter in Mr. Bodley's book, "Cardinal Manning and Other Essays."

FRANCE AND THE WAR

different writers (among them M. G. R. Lévy, in the *Revue Bleue*) is always the same, as to the main point. The writers point out—as foreign observers, including myself, have done—that things have changed in the last decade. We have witnessed the commencement and positive growth of a new and fruitful idealism in France. It appears in practical life, in legislation, in public taste, in literature, philosophy, and religion. Practical signs of it are to be seen in the growth of stricter sentiments of personal and social morality, of temperance, of the limits of individual liberty, of the requirements of social solidarity and collective responsibility. The widespread discussion, focused in the Institute of France, of the alarming fall in the French birth rate, has shown this new spirit of public concern and awakened conscience. The same may

FRANCE AND THE WAR

be said in respect to the question of alcoholism. The abolition of absinthe is probably only the beginning of constructive temperance legislation. As to other legislation, a large body of measures of direct practical import has been before the Chamber of Deputies, and many of the most important have been enacted, those on gambling and illegitimacy being of great importance as signs of the movement of opinion. Many other things to which the extreme *laissez faire* theory of liberty, on the one hand, and equally extreme anti-clericalism, on the other hand, had given the respectability of popular tradition, are now frankly criticized and condemned, among them, the extreme license formerly accorded to theatrical performances.

In philosophy this new idealistic movement is taking the form, on the negative side, of a revolt from the positivism and

FRANCE AND THE WAR

naturalism of the late nineteenth century, and on the positive side, of a new intuitionism allied with spiritual mysticism. This latter, the spiritual, assumes positive religious form, filling the churches with worshipers, if not with converts, and modifying the public attitude in such important matters as laical education and the treatment of religious organizations. The change in the attitude of the press toward the church in the last decade has been most noteworthy. An analogous change in public taste and in those purveyors to it, the writers of popular literature, shows itself in a note of moral severity and literary austerity. Since the outbreak of hostilities, articles have appeared in England and the United States suggesting that the war itself had served to produce in France a new devotion, a more united national purpose, a higher synthesis of spiritual values, a rebirth of

FRANCE AND THE WAR

the historical ideals of this great people; and there can be no doubt that the fact of such a change has been made plain by the war. What an exhibition of unity, restraint, persistence, chivalry, truthfulness, added to the ordinary military virtues of loyalty, bravery, heroism! And on what a background—the usual canvas of war, painted over with figures which disgrace even the military life—brutality, license, hate, deceit, piracy! How unspectacular, too, the French campaign has been. No blowing of bugles, waving of banners, or boasting of victories! And these are the people who, above all others, love the dramatic!

But although the war came at a good time to emphasize and crystallize these motives, it did not produce them. The future student of national culture will find abundant evidence to show that the finest preparation for the war, the most con-

FRANCE AND THE WAR

vincing assurance of victory, lay not in the military equipment and armaments, not in the law of three years, not in the high financial credit of France, but in the moral purpose of the people, in their new view of life and duty. It lay in the national aspiration for a place in the brighter sun of world influence in literature, art, and morals, which was gathering force and already seeking instruments of expression when the explosion of war startled it into self-consciousness. In a series of eloquent papers written before the war, M. Gabriel Hanotaux, formerly Minister of Foreign Affairs, himself one of the founders of French colonial policy, pointed out that in view of the apparent growth of German commercial interests in the Orient, it was France's true mission to reassert in Eastern countries her ancient conquests in the higher things of the mind.

III

III

So much for the psychological and moral side of our topic. Let us now look very briefly at the political side: the existence and rôle of the triple entente.

This is not a political paper; a political discussion in detail would require minute quotations from state papers and diplomatic utterances. I wish merely to point out that the existence of the triple entente had both its motive and its justification, so far as France was concerned, in the state of French opinion and feeling which I have described above.

The theory of the "balance of power" in Europe is expounded in many treatises on European politics. As long as one

FRANCE AND THE WAR

nation or combination of nations seems bent on aggression or territorial expansion, it is necessary that its power should be balanced by that of another combination of equal military strength. This was the *raison d'être* of the Franco-Russian alliance as negotiated by M. Delcassé. France was compelled to be ready to meet the German menace, which carried in it all the power of the triple alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy. It is generally believed that it was due to the acute diplomatic insight of King Edward, that England entered potentially into this coalition with France and Russia. It is admitted with practically no dissenting voice among international jurists, that the preservation of the European peace until now has been due to the creation of the balance between these two groups of allied powers. The utility of such a balance then is evident; nothing could re-

FRANCE AND THE WAR

place it, so long as any one nation or coalition maintained armaments which threatened the security or existence of others. The only possible alternatives were disarmament, in whole or part, by common consent, or the establishment of some court of adjudication of international disputes to take the place of war.

In respect to both these directions—proposals for disarmament and suggestions looking to the judicial settlement of disputes by the development of the Hague Tribunal into a true international court of justice—France has positively shown her pacific intentions again and again. While taking a somewhat secondary place, on account of her alliance with Russia France has almost uniformly supported the suggestions made by England and the United States, while in both alternative directions mentioned, Germany has con-

FRANCE AND THE WAR

sistently and always found means to hinder progress or to block the way completely.¹ One of the late cases of this, outside the sphere of the Hague Tribunal, was the rejection of the proposal of the British Admiralty for a "naval holiday"—the cessation for a time of the building of battleships by the two countries.² On certain occasions, when pacific suggestions failed of success, the utterances of German official personages have been of the most brutal frankness, extolling the sword as the arbiter of international differences, and war as the most effective means of argument. The Kaiser's "rattling of the sword," while the subject of

¹ According to Mr. Andrew Carnegie, France had six cases before the Hague tribunal, more than any other nation. The figures given by Mr. Carnegie are: France 6, England 5, the United States 3, Germany 3.

² See the admirable brochure, "How Britain Strove for Peace, A Record of Anglo-German Negotiations, 1898-1914," by Sir Edward Cook (Macmillan, 1914).

FRANCE AND THE WAR

humorous sarcasm across the ocean, has been serious enough on the continent, since it represented the colossal military machine now being used for the ends for which it was constructed. In France, on the contrary, there has been no war party, no pan-Franc campaign corresponding to that of the pan-Germanists, no military bureaucracy, serving the diffusion of Jingoism; but a steady movement, led by men of the character of Baron d'Estournelle de Constant, in the direction of the establishment of international judicial institutions. The admirable efforts of Mr. Taft, while president, to negotiate treaties covering all possible subjects of dispute, were seconded by England and France but rejected by Germany. It was reported that Germany gave a reluctant consent after the other treaties were prepared, but as a fact no treaty with Germany was presented to the American Senate. Even

FRANCE AND THE WAR

with the United States, Germany was unwilling to forego the future right to resort to the sword.¹

All these external political signs pointed in the same direction. They gave formidable body to the French fear of German aggression. They justified fully both the military preparation and the formation of the triple entente, considered as the means of preventing or checking such aggression. When the moment arrived and the pretext arose, it became evident that the voice of diplomacy, the cry of alarm of all Europe in the interests of millions of people, and the trumpet call of national honor, were together not to

¹ The suggestion made by the present writer, in an address before an American organization in Paris, of an "All-Atlantic Alliance," a moral affirmation by England, France, and the United States in the sense of Mr. Taft's treaties, was well received. The treatises, as presented to the Senate, only to meet defeat, practically amounted to such an affirmation.

FRANCE AND THE WAR

be sufficient to stay the fearful thing; it was to be, after all, the appeal to arms for which the nation trained in military science had always declared its preference. To France the menace turned in a day into the onrushing monster, and the triple entente showed itself the adequate defense provided by a wise and prudent foresight. For the attack took just the form that all the world had anticipated, a crushing blow at France. The first object of the war—the means to the ultimate end, if not that end itself—was the destruction of France, a means which doubled itself when this object required, as further means, the violation of Belgium.

Was ever a people better justified in the maintenance of an army and navy, in the deliberate adoption of the machinery of a military state, than twentieth century France? What else could have prevailed against the German sword? It is written:

FRANCE AND THE WAR

“He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword.”

It is now plain, I think, that the German menace, taking on acute form in 1905, has meant to the French the imminent danger of war. Not desire for revenge, not military ambition, has finally led them into it, but the necessity of national defense, combined with a duty to the public right of Europe. To England, the latter, the duty was urgent only when the moment came; to France, both the duty and the necessity were immediate.

The attitude of the French people in this war is well summarized, in my opinion, in the following words spoken by a man now high in the counsels of State: “The war, to all good Frenchmen, a necessity to face, a duty to fulfill—but with what heaviness of heart (*dans le cœur du vrai français, quelle lourde tristesse*)!”

FRANCE AND THE WAR

M. Viviani, the Premier, closes his patriotic New Year's address to the Chamber of Deputies with these words:¹

"If this contest is the most gigantic ever recorded in history, it is not because the people are hurling themselves into warfare to conquer territory, to win enlargement of material life, and economic and political advantages, but because they are struggling to determine the fate of the world. Nothing greater has ever appeared before the vision of man. That is the stake. It is greater than our lives. Let us continue then to have but one united spirit, and tomorrow, in the peace of victory, we will recall with pride these days of tragedy, for they will have made us more valorous and better men."

As to the future, no one can prophesy; we must await the course of events. A recent book, full of fine analysis and able criticism, "France Herself Again,"² by

¹ *Journal Officiel*, Dec. 23, 1914.

² In this book, issued too late to be utilized in my paper, I find conclusions strikingly similar to those expressed here. I commend the book to English and American readers. (New York and London, Putnam.) A remarkable lecture, analyzing the practical and moral

FRANCE AND THE WAR

M. Ernest Dimnet, gives reasons for thinking that the factors of reform and vigor will dominate those of political disruption which, in his opinion, are the cause of most of the social complaints of the past. I believe his optimism is fully justified, the more because there are reasons for thinking that his indictment of the democratic régime, apart from the character of some of its politicians, is somewhat severe. M. Henri Bergson, commenting upon the recent excellent book of M. Charles Heyraud, "La France de demain," pronounces this eloquent verdict: "The difficulties which our theories labored so painfully to resolve, have been overcome by action—the action in which France is just now engaged. The diseases which we ourselves discovered, and for

effects of the war, has been published by M. E. BOUTROU, entitled "La Guerre et la Vie de demain," *Revue Bleue*, 16-23, Jan. 1915.

FRANCE AND THE WAR

which each of us proposed a remedy, have not lasted to be cured; they have been suppressed by the sheer uplift of our vitality. Internal dissensions, depopulation, alcoholism, what will remain of all this tomorrow if our *élan* be maintained? From now on France will be able to say, with one of her own great poets:

‘Le mal dont j’ai souffert s’est enfui comme un rêve.’ ”¹

¹ From M. Bergson’s “President’s Address,” December 12, 1914, before the *Académie des Sciences morales et politiques*.

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